

THE CRITIC.

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*Sed quanto ille magis formas se vestit in omnis
Tanto, gnate, magis contendere tenacia vinela.*

VIR. GEO. IV.

INGENIOUS draftsmen have, in many cities, entitled themselves to the gratitude of strangers and wayfaring men, by their accurate delineations of the streets, passages, public buildings, literary institutions and the like, which serve as highly useful guides to such persons in their dangerous peregrinations in the pursuit of business, pleasure, or instruction. These little sketches, or "pictures," as they are appropriately styled, save many modest men from the embarrassment always attendant upon a reference to clownish or surly passengers, and serve as a sort of pocket Cicerones, from whom, at any moment, correct information may be had, free from tiresome harangues or impertinent interference. It is not my

intention, in the slightest degree to underrate these works, by which, in my early wanderings, I have often been very much benefited; —but merely to suggest an improvement that will, if it can be attained, materially enhance their value. And that is the addition of a *moral chart*, (if I may be allowed the expression) to their geographical and statistical plans. Nor can I doubt that this object may be effected, in the present scientific age, upon pure mathematical principles, by some of the innumerable clubs of philosophers, moral and physical, that adorn this metropolis.

Perhaps no city in the world so obviously requires a document of this kind, as our own. It's parallel streets and Babylonish rectangles, free it from most of the intricacies which perplex strangers in large irregular towns; but its society, by its innumerable ramifications, its arbitrary and perplexing divisions, presents to foreigners a real Gordian knot, which few or none are willing or able to untie. Our present population consists of the descendants of the early settlers of the province, of citizens who have removed from other American states, of emigrants from the different countries of Europe, and of transient persons who reside for a season, longer or shorter, as the objects they have in view may require. The first class is, at least in our own estimation, the only true and exclusive nobility of the land. However humble the

origin, or menial the pursuits of the ancestor, the flight of time, and the appreciation of landed estates, have effectually purified the blood, and authorised his descendants to take precedence of the upstart offspring of any subsequent importation. But, as it has pleased the Lord, and the Legislature of this Commonwealth, to prevent the continuance of entails, and to destroy the right of primogeniture, it has not unfrequently become expedient for this privileged race to admit a species of qualified nobility, in the favourites of the blind goddess, who, by commercial speculations, by lucky blunders or otherwise, have suddenly become possessed of immense wealth—generously bartering, in holy matrimony, their pure blood and *high rank*, for the “coined money” of the upstarts. As the tone, the language, the manners, and pretensions which prevail in this order, would be unexpected and almost unintelligible to a well educated foreigner, who had not associated with the oldest Dukes in Christendom, I would recommend to the philosopher who projects the chart, to examine, not the rights, for verily I fear he might delay his work unreasonably, but the claims of these “Christianos viejos,” to superior knowledge, or refinement, or dignity, and to inform the stranger of the deference that is expected from him, leaving it at his option to give or to with-

hold it. The chart here, may also be upon a *very small scale*.

The second class have planted themselves here, because the soil seems more favourable to their growth, than that of their native states. Nevertheless they have wisely determined not to amalgamate with the former residents, but to preserve their own territorial distinctions by the aid of exclusive fraternities, mutual support, and clannish intercourse, unless they can introduce themselves by purchase, whenever the contingency occurs which I mentioned before, into the first class. The third division is split into as many septs and societies, as there are patron Saints to the different countries of the old world, and show as strong a determination to keep alive and cherish their national antipathies, in this neutral home of their adoption, as ever existed among the borderers of the "Debatable Land." Naturalized citizens of a country which guarantees to them all the free exercise and enjoyment of equal rights, they remain to each other, as far as social intercourse is concerned, Scotch and Irish, French and Swiss, Germans and Italians; and if my days are prolonged through another lustrum, I doubt not we shall see a fraternity of Cossacks, with their Hetman presiding at an annual festival, toasting the banks of the Don, and the glorious memory of *their* ancestors.

Nor will this anticipation appear extra-

gant to any one who advert's to a recent celebration in this City. It is difficult to say, whether the effort of the "club" was greater to caricature and confound, the peculiar features and distinct classes of their native land, or to show an entire disregard to the feelings of their American fellow-citizens and guests. It was not sufficient it seems to get up, on this side of the water an imitation of a foreign club, which, (with all the rank, wealth and power of that country to countenance its folly) is little better than a monument of national reproach—an annual record of ungenerous neglect and cold-hearted desertion. A more unhappy object of festive celebration, certainly, never was selected. No people in the world would ridicule and satirize more bitterly an English club, created to hallow the memory of Otway or Butler, than the same gentlemen who now carouse over the ashes of a Bard whom they suffered to live in degrading and servile labour and to perish in indigence. A paltry salary of *thirty pounds*, in the most hateful branch of public service, was all that the Chivalry, the wealth and the literary enthusiasm of Caledonia, in the moment of warmest affection, could bestow upon the ornament of their Isle,—the favourite of *their Muse*—one, who (in his own expressive words) "held the patent for his honours immediately "from Almighty God." Generosity and admiration could withhold the beggarly pittance

to support his life, but ostentation, urged by tardy shame, can now sacrifice thousands on the altar of vanity to embalm his fame. The Senate, that inserted on their records the proscribed name of the Ephesian incendiary, were guilty of no solecism like this. A nation here signs and seals the arrêt of her own condemnation, and by public rites and ceremonies, displays to the world her mortal sins, the heartless abandonment of her brightest Son.

But this is a matter for their own consideration. If they persevere in their festival here, *in this style*, the consequences are apparent, and well worth a moment's reflection. The manner of conducting this Anniversary carousal, on a late occasion, offensive as it has been to the good sense of a vast majority of our citizens, furnishes an apt illustration of my previous remarks. A late writer whose "Letters" (with due allowance for bombastic descriptions and literary heresies) furnished much amusing information on Scottish subjects and characters, rises to rapturous exclamations at the sight of the titled Grandeur, the Bench, the Bar, the Church, the Wealthy and the Learned, assembled to do honour "to one low-born peasant." He will pitch his strain a note higher, if *human skill can extend this gamut*, when the splendid *morceau* of imported eloquence, in which the "Club" is be-celebrated here meets his astonished

eye. Yet I, who am an American of an old fashioned stamp, and admit the lawfulness of the existing Government of my Country, viewing her as *rightfully*, "a free, sovereign, and independent State," cannot allow the extravagant vapouring and insulting toasts of this exotic "Club" to go abroad into the world, without comment. So long as these foreign societies are confined to the charitable purposes for which they were professedly instituted, they are entitled to the praise and assistance of all good men. If, however, they will wander from the path of usefulness, and burst upon us in "thundering" celebrations, and announce to us poor *Aborigines*, the "res gestæ" of their sacred orgies in all the gasconade of exuberant whiskey toddy—tacit observation makes all "airt and part" of the offence. When "a wheen bits o' Glasgow bodies," as Baillie Nicol Jarvie says, sit down in a calm moment to draft toasts for a meeting, composed almost exclusively of men, who have *sicorn* to support the Constitution of the United States, and unblushingly place first in their list "THE KING"—when they studiously postpone the notice of eminent Americans, to their own third, fourth, and fifth rate worthies—pay fulsome and sickening compliments to their guests, in their presence, and invite the ministers of foreign powers to witness the impunity with which they venture to wound the best national feelings of a people who have

received them as brothers—it becomes the imperious duty of every indignant Citizen to express his disgust. As far as my observation has extended, no occasion ever called forth more general resentment than the late festival. Not satisfied, however, with declaring a preference for their native land—they presume upon the ignorance of us poor Philadelphians. But my spleen vanishes here. The folly of the attempt makes it simply ridiculous. I had supposed, and I believe most of my countrymen know, that the line of demarcation between the different parts of that nation has been fully defined for ages. Their manners, habits and feelings vary as much, if not more, than those of the English and Dutch—and in good sooth, the "*Gathering of the Clans*," might as well have been sung with "enthusiasm" by any set of native Yankees as by this meeting of Lowland Gentlemen. And, further when the good wine had done its good office, some wag among them, discovered an astonishing similarity between an American Philosopher and a Scotch Poet—both were familiar with the "*Electric Fluid*"—one, in the form of *Lightning*—the other—of Usquebaugh!

Now, many gentlemen, Scottish and American were seated at the board of the "club," whose esteem I prize, and I know not that I have one enemy in the whole association—But if the voice of the *Critic* can be heard

amid the sounding festivity of "the club," he would earnestly recommend the *immediate abandonment of this festival*. If this cannot be admitted, he would merely hint, as follows, at the recurrence thereof. 1. To meet as Americans—or as Europeans; and when they drink a crowned head (as that is indispensable) to specify candidly what *gentleman* they mean, "from sultry Afric to the Pole;" for we "Sa—" "vages," recognise no individual by the title of "The King."—2. To have the kindness to notify their guests of their intention to drink their health and flatter them to their faces—that they may prepare themselves to deliver *extempore* speeches—for the world, on this occasion, has lost much by the neglect of this European precaution.—3. I recommend, when the Club next "sets to," the appointment of a Committee, with instructions to sing from the sweet Poet of this mock celebration, as follows,

"We are na fou, we're na that fou,"
"But just a drappie in our e'e;"
"And when we're fou, 'tw' meickle" goât,
"What wondrous "parallels" we see!"

And then to draw an "elegant parallel" between *Washington* and "Allan Ramsay the "periwig maker."

Let me, however, return to my subject; boundless subdivisions of these orders exist, with rules of social communion, more or less exclusive—the *ante-nati* and *post-nati* of the

period of national existence, and the hereditary supporters of *their* respective opinions—the Puritans, who, with holy horror denounce all public amusements, as the devices of Satan—the fashionable world, independent of the first chosen few—the *soi-disant* literary society (God save the mark!) *cum multis aliis*. The effects of these associations, this clannish indifference or hostility, and this persevering national hatred upon social meetings, good fellowship and public spirit will, doubtless, furnish much valuable matter for my future speculation, and in due time, I mean to hold discourse with all these “learned Thebans.”

S.